

## ***CITY OF PLEASANT HILL***

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### **ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW**

#### **Applicant Guide**

#### **WHY IS THERE AN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION?**

The Architectural Review Commission was established by the City Council to promote and attain quality design, site relationships, and other aesthetic considerations of development in the City. Special attention is given to building design, the arrangement of buildings, parking, landscaping, and landscape design.

The Architectural Review Commission must review and approve a proposed development prior to the issuance of building permits. In addition, the Commission reviews and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission on tentative subdivision maps. The Commission also reviews requests for freestanding signs and master sign programs. The Commission may impose conditions and modifications to project plans as necessary to make the necessary findings for approval.

The Zoning ordinance requires that the Architectural Review Commission review each application for a building permit in the following land use districts:

- A. Single-family districts prior to a subdivision;
- B. Two-family district;
- C. Multiple-family districts;
- D. Neighborhood business district;
- E. Retail business district;
- F. General commercial district;
- G. Controlled manufacturing district;
- H. Limited Industrial district;
- J. Planned district;
- K. Thoroughfare-commercial district

#### **WHAT ARE THE STEPS?**

**Step 1** Preliminary Review - Prior to submittal of a formal application, it is recommended that the applicant discuss the preliminary proposal with Community Development Department staff. The staff can, if requested, respond back in writing regarding the project conformity with the Zoning Ordinance, applicable site planning, building design, landscaping, and other criteria, and application fee requirements. It is also important to determine if a sign program exists for your development and what are the criteria and standards.

**Step 2** Filing the Application - Application for a Architectural Review should be made to the Community Development Department on its Application for Development Review form. The application form must be accompanied by the additional supporting materials specified by the City including plans, drawings, and other project description information necessary to allow adequate review of the proposed action. A filing fee will be required for each application in the amount set by the City Council.

A Community Development staff member will be assigned to review the application materials for completeness and to prepare a staff report to the Architectural Review Commission. Upon submittal, the application will be reviewed for completeness within 30 days. If the application is complete, the applicant will be notified of a hearing date. If the application is incomplete, the applicant will be notified of the necessary additional information required for a complete submittal. Public hearings will be scheduled not earlier than two weeks after the application is deemed complete. Additional information may be required as staff review of the project progresses.

**Step 3** Environmental Review - Most Architectural Review applications will not need to go through a complex Environmental Review Process because most are related apply only to existing structures, they can be deemed to be exempt from any further environmental review. To exempt an application, the staff will have to review the application and determine if it is consistent with one of the exemption classifications.

If a project is not exempt, the staff will prepare an Initial Study and that study indicates no significant potential environmental impacts, a Negative Declaration (a brief statement describing why an Environmental Impact Report is not required) will be prepared for the Zoning Administrator's approval. In very rare cases, an Environmental Impact Report may have to be prepared.

**Step 4** Architectural Review Commission - A study session is recommended for most applications. At this meeting Staff will make an informal review of the proposal which will be followed by the applicant's presentation. The Commission will then

give the applicant some general directions and guidelines to follow to complete the application for formal Commission review.

The applicant or future applicant shall submit 6 copies of drawings to Staff no less than 7 days prior to the scheduled study session.

Following the study sessions, if any, staff will prepare a staff report to the Architectural Review Commission which includes: (1) a description of the proposal; (2) a summary of its relationship to relevant Zoning Ordinance provisions, as well as its design considerations and (3) related staff recommendations with respect to project approval. A copy of this report will be sent to the applicant during the week preceding the Architectural Review Commission hearing. Copies will also be available for public review at the Community Development Department.

At the meeting, Staff will make its report and recommendation which will be followed by the applicant's presentation. The Commission will then make a decision based on the Staff recommendation, the testimony of the applicant and other interested persons, environmental information, previous comments of the Commission, if any, and any other pertinent information. After review of the plans, the Commission may: (1) approve or conditionally approve the sign as submitted; (2) postpone action pending receipt of additional information or amended plans; (3) deny the application. A copy of the Commission's decision and findings will be mailed to the applicant within ten days.

If a hearing on an application is continued for the submission of revised plans or additional information, the revised drawings or additional information must be submitted to the Community Development Director a minimum of 10 calendar days before the next Public Hearing.

**Step 5** Building Permit Issuance - After 10 days have elapsed from ARC approval of the sign (i.e., no appeal), and all application approval requirements and related ordinances have been complied with, the City Building Inspector may issue a Building Permit if one is required. The Building Inspector will then work to ensure that the project is completed in compliance with all permits, approved plans and related conditions.

**Step 6** Business License - Following the Architectural Review Commission approval, the permittee should wait 14 calendar days to apply for a Business License, thus allowing the appeal period to lapse. If an appeal has not been filed, then the permittee should apply and pay the necessary fee to the Finance Department for a Business License.

## **WHAT MUST BE SUBMITTED?**

All submittal information required in the Architectural Submittal Requirements Checklist shall be presented including the Application for Development Review form, related fees to the Community Development Department before the application can be accepted as complete.

## **MAY A DECISION BE APPEALED?**

You or anyone else who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Architectural Review Commission may appeal that decision to the City Council. To appeal, a written statement and filing fee must be filed with the Agency within 10 days after the decision is made at a public meeting. A public hearing will then be set before the City Council to consider the appeal.

If no appeal to a decision is filed within 10 days, the decision of the Architectural Review Commission will be considered final.

## **WHEN DOES THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION MEET?**

The Architectural Review Commission holds Public Hearings on the first and third Thursdays of every month. These meetings commence at 5:00 p.m. and are held in the City Manager's Conference room at City Hall.

## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO OBTAIN ARC APPROVAL?**

Normally about four weeks. This period will be longer if the decision is appealed to the City Council.